

INFORMATION ECONOMY REPORT 2009

Trends and Outlook in Turbulent Times

The Information Economy Report 2009: Trends and Outlook in Turbulent Times is the fourth in a series published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The report is one of the few publications to monitor global trends in information and communication technologies (ICTs) as they affect developing countries. It serves as a valuable reference for policymakers in those nations. The 2009 edition will be launched at 5 p.m. GMT on 22 October. It gives special attention to the impact of the global financial crisis on ICTs.

Contents

- Global and regional trends in the diffusion of ICTs such as fixed and mobile telecommunications, Internet, and broadband
- Ranking of the most dynamic economies in terms of increased ICT connectivity between 2003 and 2008
- Monitoring of the "digital divide"
- Survey of national statistical offices on the use of ICT in the business sector
- A review of the changing patterns in the trade of ICT goods
- A mapping of the new geography in the offshoring of IT and ICT-enabled services.
- Policy recommendations on how developing countries can reap greater benefits from ICT
- A statistical annex with global ICT data.

The Information Economy Report 2009 (IER 2009) offers a fresh assessment of the diffusion of key ICT applications between 2003 and 2008. While fixed telephone subscriptions are now in slight decline, mobile and Internet use continues to expand rapidly in most countries and regions. At the same time, there is a widening gap between high-income and low-income countries in broadband connectivity. Broadband penetration is now eight times higher in developed than in developing countries. The report explores policy options for countries seeking to improve broadband connectivity.

The IER 2009 includes a chapter on the use of ICTs in the business sector. Drawing on unique data, it examines how ICT use differs both between and within countries, highlighting the rural-urban divide as well as that between large and small companies. The report recommends that governments in developing countries give more attention to ICT uptake and use by small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as they are lagging behind larger firms. And it discusses those aspects of ICT where government intervention can make a difference.

A third chapter is devoted to the impact of the financial crisis on ICT trade. While a growing share of exports of ICT goods and services is accounted for by developing economies, especially in Asia, the crisis has affected goods and services quite differently. ICT goods are among the categories of trade most negatively affected by the recession, while IT and ICT-related services appear to be among the most resilient.

A statistical annex to the report provides data on ICT infrastructure, ICT use, and ICT trade for up to 200 economies. A PDF version of the IER 2009 and its statistical annex are downloadable from the UNCTAD website (www.unctad.org/ier) from 23 October 2009.

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